

Emperor and requesting long life for him. By emphasizing the place of Heaven, however, *feng* would help to create the idea of a celestial unity and monarchy of which the imperial state could be held to be a counterpart. *Shan* also loaned its strength to this by stressing the supremacy of Earth (*Ti*) over the many local gods of the soil and of natural objects. The time-honored ceremonies to these latter could not well be abolished, but they tended to perpetuate the territorial particularism which was the enemy of imperialism, and anything which strengthened the preeminence of *Ti* would be a support to the monarch's authority. Possibly with a similar purpose, Wu Ti arranged the gods of heaven into a hierarchy, placing over it the five "Emperors Above" who presided over the four cardinal points and the center and who had come down from the Ch'in, and superimposing in still higher rank a supreme god called *Tai I*, or the Great One. The general conception of the spiritual organization of the universe as a counterpart of its political organization appears not to have been new, but by stressing the idea that both halves of the spirit world are monarchical in form and by emphasizing the position of the Emperor as the head of the cult, the dignity of the visible ruling house was enhanced.

In spite of his statecraft, Wu Ti was as much fascinated by the beliefs of the popular religion of the age, and especially of the debased Taoism, as had been Shih Huang Ti. Attempts at the transmutation of metals and the search for an elixir of life and other means of achieving immortality had his endorsement, and the supposed experts in these fields exercised great influence over him. Shamanism, or its close cousin, was powerful at court, pos-

sibly strengthened by contact with peoples in the Northwest, where it seems to have been particularly at home.

THE DECLINE OF THE EARLIER HAN  
DYNASTY

Of the immediate successors of Wu Ti not much need here be said. For nearly a hundred years the Empire continued without any major event which should detain us in detail. Two or three of the seven monarchs whom this paragraph covers appear to have been men of some ability, although none was outstanding. At least one was a patron of literature and encouraged the editing of the ancient classics. The inevitable court intrigues which